

VZCZCXRO2577
RR RUEHAG RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLZ
DE RUEHDL #0565 1421145
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 221145Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6949
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES
RUEHBL/AMCONSUL BELFAST 0386
RULSDMK/DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS DUBLIN 000565

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [EI](#)

SUBJECT: EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT TO
BECOME INTERNATIONAL

REF: DUBLIN 559

11. During the May 17-18 European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) in Dublin, delegates voted unanimously to transform the organization into an "International Transport Forum." The new organization would be more global in scope and less Eurocentric. (The ECMT currently has 43 member countries, drawn principally from Europe, and 7 non-European associate member countries.) The transformation would begin with next year's annual ministerial in Sofia, with the process achieving completion in five years.

12. U.S. Undersecretary of Transportation for Policy Jeffrey Shane recommended that the ECMT take up, as the principal theme for next year's ministerial, transportation congestion.

U/S Shane noted that this recommendation followed on May 15-19 National Transportation Week events in the United States that highlighted transportation bottlenecks as an impediment to economic growth and job creation. U/S Shane added that congestion in the movement of people and goods was a problem that was shared globally and therefore an appropriate subject for the ECMT, which now would be more international in scope. ECMT participants supported the recommendation, with some initial discussion of whether transportation "congestion" or "efficiency" would be the better term for the focus area. Participants also asked whether the United States could take a leadership role within the ECMT in preparing the groundwork for the next ministerial. U/S Shane reserved on whether the USG would be in a position to accept this responsibility pending consultations with colleagues in Washington. (Note: The request for U.S. leadership in this area was noteworthy in that the United States is an associate, not full, member of the ECMT.)
Kenny